

February 4, 2011

To: Chairman David Howard of the Human Service Committee and Committee members

From: Lynn Hellenga

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I am writing for your support of House Bill no. 267 introduced by MS. Sands. I am a Registered Dietitian and a mother of two sons currently in Elementary school. Both of my children were enrolled in Montana's licensed child-care centers in the recent past. According to KIDS COUNT 2010 there are 20,000 children 0-5 years of age in our state's licensed childcare. The number of babies now at 12,435 also continues to grow in Montana.

I am very, very concerned with the inconsistent support for infants to be fed expressed breast milk in child care centers and homes across our state. The promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding are known to help prevent excess weight in childhood and to help develop a strong immune system in our children. **Mont. Code Ann. § 39-2-215 (2007)** was passed to assure public workers have accommodation to express breast milk when returning to work. National awareness and support is prominent with the recent release of the Surgeon General's CALL TO ACTION TO SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING, Healthy People 2020 Goals and The Affordable Care Act's Nursing Mother's Accommodation. These actions all demonstrate a desire for mothers to feed their babies expressed breast milk when they are unable to directly breastfeed. In Montana mothers have a high initiation of breastfeeding however rates significantly drop off as the child is introduced to childcare. This bill would help assure mothers the basic knowledge to provide expressed breast milk in a safe and consistent manner is expected in licensed child-care settings. This bill provides an excellent and needed opportunity for guidance and education of Montana childcare providers to provide the optimal nutrition of breast milk to our children.

Please support House Bill no. 267 to assure the future leaders of Montana have the best opportunity for health.

Lynn Hellenga MSRD, CLC

